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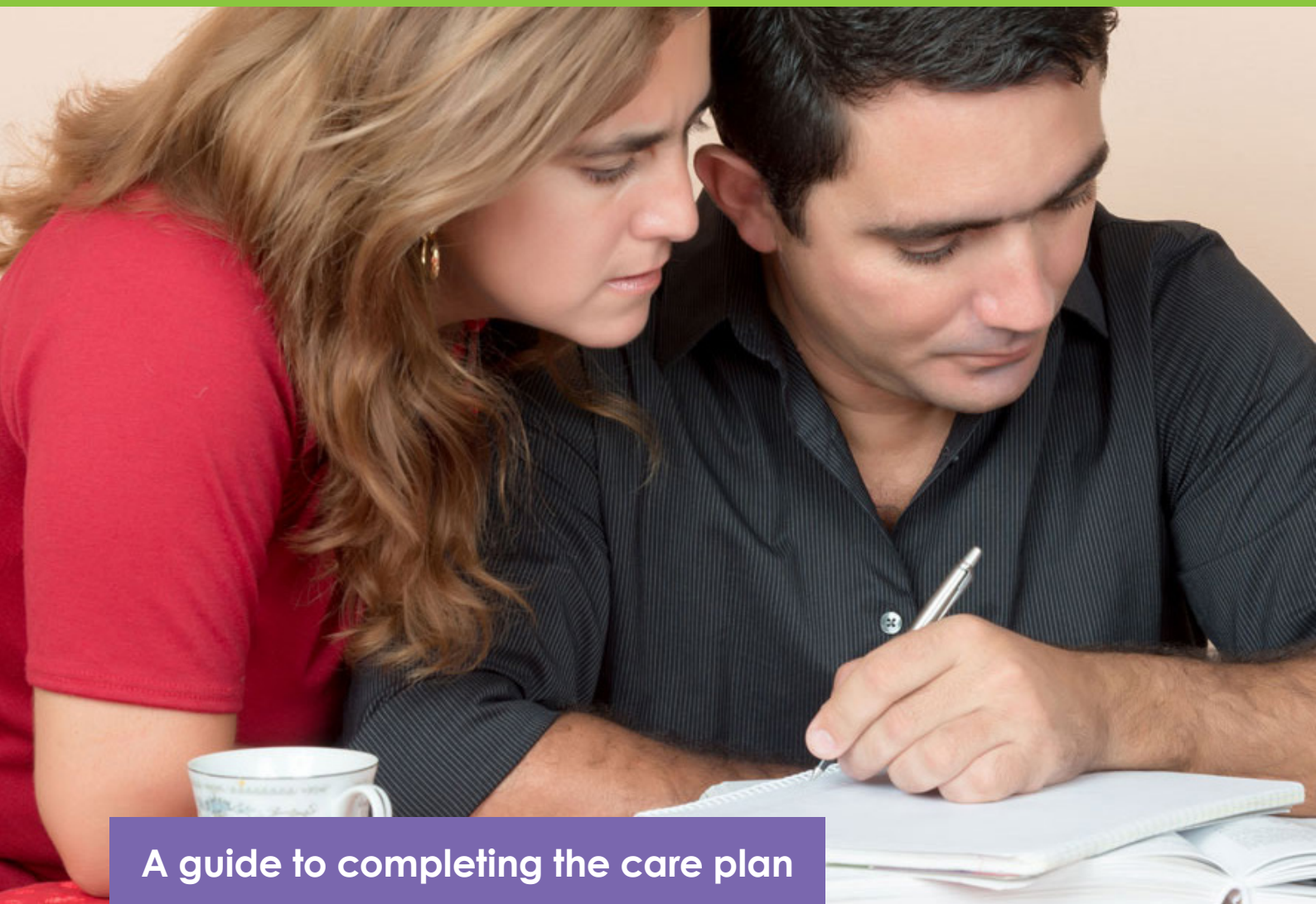
Children of Parents
with a Mental Illness

How to use the **'child care plan'**



The documents in this folder form a 'just in case' plan. It lets people know (including family members and health professionals) what your wishes are if things get tough and how they can best support your child. It is particularly helpful for those who might not know you well.

This is not a legally binding document, but is written to outline your family's preferences and to maintain the everyday routines that your child needs to feel safe and secure when there is a rough patch.



A guide to completing the care plan

As a parent, you understand your child's needs and routines. The care plan templates help you to think in some depth about what you need to plan for, in case of a crisis or a period of being unwell.

Your child's care plan is best written when you are well, together with someone close to you. Ask your partner, a family member, friend, support person or your mental health professional to help you reflect on the questions and identify people that could help.

Step 1: Get prepared

- Print a copy of the 'child care plan' for each child in your family. If you have a baby, print the 'baby care plan'.
- Read through the plan and get familiar with it.
- Talk with your partner or support person to identify who would be appropriate to provide support or care for your child if you were really unwell or hospitalised. This plan might be for a matter of hours, days, or longer, and may involve one person, or more.
- Arrange to talk to that person (or people) to explain what you are doing and seek their permission to be listed as someone to be contacted on your plan. Consider using the example script provided in the section 'Seeking permission from a carer' to explain the situation.
 - Explain that you will bring a document with details about your child's life and preferences, and information that will help them care for your child.

Step 2: Complete the plan for each child

- Complete the cover page for each of your children, outlining their personal details and who you would prefer to take care of them.
- Look through the attachments and add detail to the plan under each section. The purpose of the attachments is to give your nominated person enough information to help them to care for and nurture your child when you are unwell or away.
- (Optional) Offer your child a copy of the 'My details' document to fill out if you would like them to be involved.
- Provide a copy of the information to the person (or people) nominated who will care for your child.
- Provide the cover page detail to the people who would be able to use the information if you become unwell (e.g. your mental health professional, a close friend, counsellor).

Advising your child

It is a parent's choice regarding whether you write the care plan with your child, or explain it to them afterwards. If appropriate (e.g. if your child is older) you may let them know that if anything happens they can call the people listed in the care plan. Make sure they have a copy of these numbers in their phone in case there is ever an emergency and they can't speak with you.

If it is appropriate, explain to your child that their teacher, your family doctor etc. has been informed, in case something happens and you can't speak with your child directly. Let them know about the person (or people) who would look after them if you were unable to.



Seeking permission from a carer

An example script is provided if you need help to start a conversation with the person you would like to look after your child.

'As a family we are planning ahead for those 'just in case' times when I might be unwell, or if something happens and the kids need extra support or to be cared for by someone other than me and' (your partner, if relevant).

To be prepared, we are writing a care plan for our child that has detailed information about them for someone who would provide support or even look after them, if needed.

We want to make sure that they will be looked after by people close to them. You are a really important person to us and to (your child). Would you be willing to look after (your child) if the need ever arises? It could be for a night, for several days, or maybe even weeks.'

If they answer with 'yes'

'We are grateful for your help. We will now complete a 'care plan' document that has details about (your child's) school, likes and dislikes, routines etc. so that you know what would help them to feel comfortable. We will give this to you to keep on record.

We are also giving a copy of your details to our (e.g. doctor, mental health worker, child's school) so that they know they can call you in case it's needed and I can't speak with you directly. Are you happy for me to provide your phone number?'